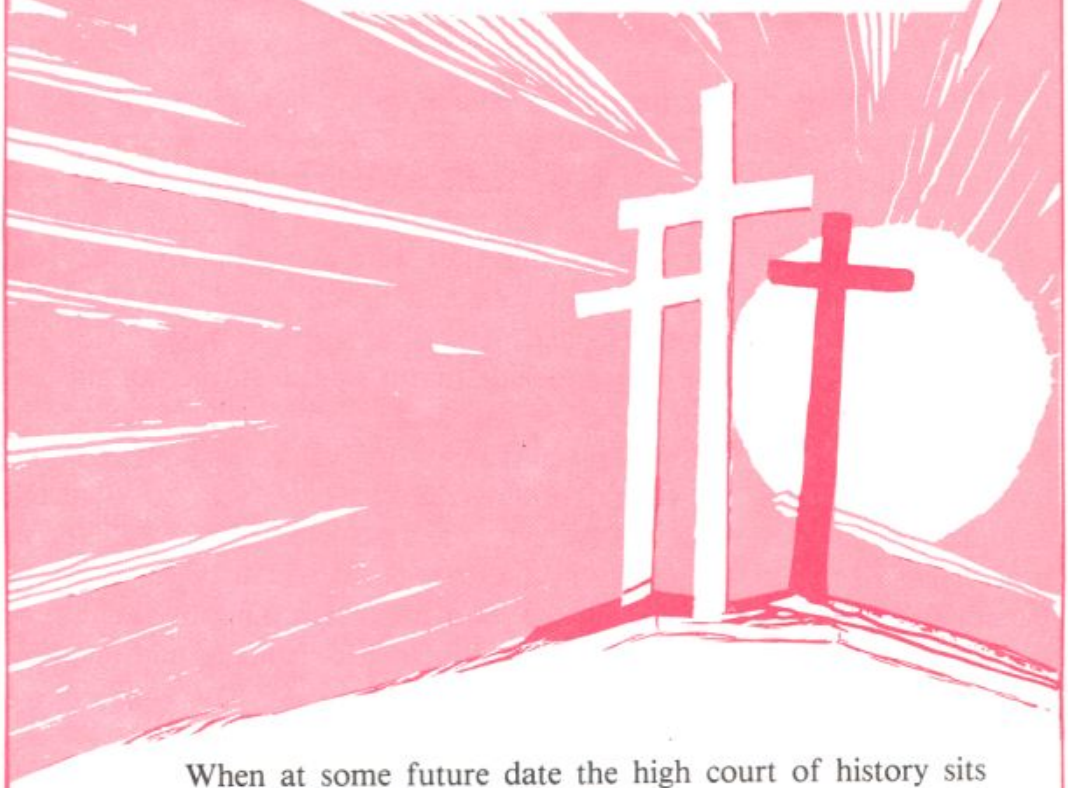
RESTORATION REVIEW



When at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each of us, recording whether in our brief span of service we fulfilled our responsibilities to the state, in whatever office we hold, will be measured by the answers to four questions: First, were we truly men of courage. Second, were we truly men of judgment. Third, were we truly men of integrity. Finally, were we truly men of dedication.

—John F. Kennedy

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The Adventures of the Early Church …

PENTECOST: A SENSE OF AWE

A sense of awe was everywhere, and many marvels and signs were brought about through the apostles. Acts 2:43, NEB

Luke, the historian of the earliest church, is giving a general description of the first congregation in Jerusalem. A sense of awe pervaded this community of believers as the events of Pentecost unfolded before their eyes. The New English Bible gives us a better picture than the usual "And fear came upon every soul." It was not that they were afraid but that they were filled with wonder. What they had seen and heard, what they themselves had experienced, was mind-boggling. It was a reaction mixed with fear, reverence and wonder. We may conclude that it was so staggering and awe inspiring that it was almost too much for them.

As we look into these Christian origins for values and principles for our time this is one we should not overlook. Theirs was no "baloney attitude" in that they witnessed the events as fascinated spectators. Nor was it a "hands in pocket" mentality in that they could take it or leave it. Luke intends for us to see that this was the most important thing by far that had ever happened to them. The events were both life-changing and character-changing. They would clearly never be the same again. The believers were struck with a sense of awe. Pentecost was awful, in the proper sense of that term.

If the modern church is to recapture the excited faith of these earliest believers, it must come to realize its pentecostal roots. It is not too much to say that Pentecost was not only the greatest hour in the history of the church but the most momentous social event in the history of the world. We have much to learn from Pentecost in that it is here that we have the heart of the Christian faith.

The setting was ready-made for a momentous event, for Pentecost, known in Scripture as the Feast of Weeks, was one of those occasions when the Israelites would "go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year" (Ex. 34:24). The other annual feasts were Passover and Booths (or Tabernacles). Pentecost, which came seven weeks after Passover, was the harvest festival, the time of the ingathering and the occasion when the first fruits of the wheat harvest were offered to the Lord. It was a gala occasion, a time for rejoicing over a plentiful harvest. As each family made its way into Jerusalem it would

bring along two loaves of bread made of fine flour from the new harvest and wave it before the Lord with thanksgiving (Lev. 23:17). It was the kind of thing the children would remember in growing up at home.

While Pentecost did not attract the immense crowds that Passover did, overflowing the city, there was nonetheless many pilgrims in Jerusalem at this time of year. Unlike the other feasts, Pentecost was but one day, always a Sunday. On this occasion the year was 30 A.D., the Jewish day and month, 6 Siwan (May 28 to us). We even know that it was 9 o'clock in the morning (Acts 2:15).

The excitement all began when some of these pilgrims, stirring about the city as visitors do, intermingled no doubt with town folk, were attracted to the strange behavior of a small band of men. It is noteworthy that from this point on the rich symbolism has to do with *communication,* including the symbol of tongues, as if the God of heaven had something special to announce. That the Father would choose these great festivals, Passover in order to manifest the Christ as the paschal lamb and now Pentecost to declare him to be the first fruit of the resurrection harvest, shows that he preferred to make history where the people were. The Messiah was born in a remote village with angels looking on, but the great *social* events, including the birth of the Church of Christ, took place where the crowds were.

While we cannot be sure of the sequence of events, it is clear that "the crowd" (these visitors from all over the Mediterranean world, with at least 16 nations represented) was attracted to a certain part of the city, to a certain house, because of a strange noise that seemed to have come from nowhere. It was not actually "a strong driving wind" but that is what it sounded like. This "wind" attracts them to the scene as if it were a magnet. We may assume that by now, the disciples of Jesus who are the stars of this drama, have overflowed "the house in which they were sitting" and are now out in the street or streets.

The awful aspects of this drama include what the crowds saw as well as what they heard. The disciples, now dispersed somehow among the people, were "sat upon" by tongue-like flames of fire. We might suppose a "tongue" danced above the head or shoulder of each apostle, lingering there as he spoke of the mighty wonders of God. At the baptism of Jesus it was the Spirit in the likeness of a dove that hovered about him. At the baptism of the apostles in the Spirit (Were they baptized in water?) it was in tongues like fire that the Spirit was manifested.

Acts 2:4 tells us, using the NEB: “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” This alone was enough to awe those that gathered. They both saw and heard manifestations of the Holy Spirit of God from heaven. As “devout men,” as Luke describes them, they would be of right heart and mind to respond positively to what was taking place. Luke piles up the adjectives in describing their initial response: they were bewildered, amazed, astonished, and perplexed. These are the ingredients for a sense of awe.

We may not be able to determine precisely what it was that bewildered the crowd. It was more than the sound of a mighty wind that first attracted them. Luke says they were bewildered “because each one heard the apostles talking in his own language” (v. 6), and then the crowd complains “Why, they are all Galileans, are they not, these men who are speaking? How is it then that we hear them, each of us in his own native language?” (v. 8) Then there were the tongues of fire that hovered over each speaker. No wonder the chronicler was lost for words in describing the crowd’s reaction!

It must have been really something else to both see and hear the Holy Spirit of God. But what did they hear? Were the apostles speaking in ecstatic tongues, which appears to be the case in the church at Corinth, which the crowd heard each in his own native tongue? This would have made it a miracle of *hearing* as well as speaking. Or were the “other tongues” (v. 4) the native languages of those in the crowd? There is a third possibility. The apostles may have been praising God in their native Aramaic, not ecstatic tongues or foreign languages, and the audience understand in their various languages. This would have made it appear that “other tongues” were being spoken.

If it were primarily a miracle of hearing, it would solve the problem of how the twelve apostles could be speaking fifteen or more different dialects and languages, presumably at the same time. Some think the tongues were ecstatic with just enough words in the native languages to attract each one’s attention.

Based upon verse 8, which tells us that each one heard in his own native tongue, my guess is that the apostles were dispersed over the area, with each one speaking in a different language, which would draw each nationality to the group of his own tongue. Then, finally, when Peter stood up to speak to them all (verse 14) they became one large crowd and the “tongues” ended, for Peter would speak in Aramaic, which they would have all understood, being Jews. So the “tongues” phenomenon was not so much to communicate with them as to get their attention. The heart of the drama of Pentecost was Peter’s message, which was the preaching of the gospel of the Messiah.

And here we find the main source of their sense of awe. They were awed by the gospel, which is God's power to save. They were awed because once they were smitten with the realization that they had committed the gravest of sins, the murder of the Messiah, they saw the grace of God in the forgiveness of what they had done.

The crowd, witness to all the marvels, had but one question, *What can this mean?* The only exceptions were a few who sought to discount it all with "They have been drinking!," which in the light of the facts was nonsense. We all know that even devout people sometimes talk nonsense!

Once Peter explains that there was no drinking involved, he gets on with his message, which is all Jesus Christ. Here we learn our greatest lesson, our heritage from Pentecost: *to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

Peter is proclaiming Jesus as the fulfillment of all that the Jewish Scriptures hoped for. Eternity has at last invaded time and Jesus is the hinge of history. The apostle proclaims the *kerugma*, the message, for the first time, which was the prototype of all Christian preaching that was to follow. The facts are clearly set forth in his proclamation: the Messiah has come, born of the line of David; his credentials were evident in the miracles he performed, including the miracle of this Pentecost; he was nonetheless murdered at the hands of wicked men, crucified; he came forth from the tomb alive and he lives even now at God's right hand.

So what did the marvels of Pentecost mean?, the question asked by the crowd. Peter answers: "The Jesus we speak of has been raised by God, as we can all bear witness. Exalted thus with God's right hand, he received the Holy Spirit from the Father, as was promised, and all that you now see and hear flows from him" (verses 32-33). Peter is telling them with both simplicity and awe what is behind it all —the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has come, and you've seen him with your own eyes and heard him with your own ears. And what does that mean? It means that Jesus of Nazareth, whom you murdered, Peter tells them, and who received the Holy Spirit before we did, is the risen Christ, and he is the one who has done all these wonders.

The apostle then hangs on them the one certainty that made this Pentecost the day that it was: "Let all Israel then accept as certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (verse 36). The certainty was sealed by Jesus' resurrection from the dead, Peter tells them.

The power of the gospel cut them to the heart. They now ask not for meaning of events but for direction for their souls, *What are we to do?*

Since Pentecost served as a memorial for the giving of the law at Sinai, it was appropriate for the apostle to turn to the two oldest laws that God ever gave to man: repentance and obedience! "'Repent,' said Peter, 'repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (verse 38).

The miracle of Pentecost was that even those that brutally killed the Lord of glory could receive the Holy Spirit, the self same wonder that they saw and heard that day. While it was God who had chosen them rather than they who had chosen God, they had a response to make by reforming their lives and being baptized for the remission of their sins. Repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the divine order that the church is to honor forever.

The twelve (or 120 if you like) suddenly became 3,000 more, as verse 41 indicates: "Then those who accepted his words were baptized, and some three thousand were added to their number that day."

That should end all argument about whether a believer is to be baptized. Those who *accepted* the word were baptized. We can only conclude that if one refused baptism he would be one who did not accept the word. The implication is that some were in that category, but those who *did* accept the gospel truths were baptized. We may also conclude that they also received the Holy Spirit on that day, just as the apostles did. The Scriptures teach that all those who obey Christ are baptized by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).

Yes, there would be a sense of awe, wouldn't there? They were all now baptized in the Holy Spirit. And that is not all. They are now Jesus' functioning ecclesia, his own called-out community —"church" we say though that hardly seems to fit here. Verse 42 tells us: "They met constantly to hear the apostles teach, and to share the common life, to break bread, and to pray."

Here we have the basics for the ongoing Church of Christ on earth. They *assembled* to study the apostles' teaching; as a community they *shared* the reality of Jesus together (the NEB does well to avoid the term *fellowship* here, which is ambiguous); they *broke bread* together, which now included the Lord's supper as well as a common meal; and they were a *praying* church.

Their love as a new community in the Spirit reached out particularly to the poor, for "as the need of each required" they would sell their property and make distribution. But this is nothing like Marxist communism, for it was first circumstantial, as there was need, and not contrived and not necessarily continuous. And it was voluntary, motivated by loving concern, and not by fiat.

Moreover, Pentecost rang with the spirit of catholicity, even if the setting was Jewish. When we see the fiery tongues as a symbol of Pentecost we can think of the gospel reaching out to all men as well as of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The pentecostal symbol is *tongues,* God communicating to man, *all* mankind that he is a God of grace and forgiveness. That is the point of verse 5, for men were there from "every nation under heaven." Those who demand that the Bible means exactly what it says will have trouble here, for only 16 nations were represented among the hundreds that then filled the world. The Japanese were not there, nor the Chinese, nor the Indians. Thus "every nation under heaven" is Luke's way of telling us that the heritage of Pentecost is for all, universal or catholic.

Luke adds some tender touches, something like P.S.'s to a love letter, as in verses 46-47: the new community was of one mind and they continued their daily attendance at the temple (They did not cease being Jews!); they broke bread together in private -homes; they shared their meals with unaffected joy (How beautiful!); they praised God and enjoyed the favor of all the people (Persecution came later). And they kept having additions, every day!

All these things underscore that great line, *A sense of awe was everywhere.* That is what Pentecost is all about, awe, and now we see why. —*the Editor*

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CHURCH OF CHRIST ROOTS AT THEIR BEST

The alumni are justly proud of their connection to the University, and happy to have spent formative years on the Charles. They've shown they understand that the more you nourish your roots, the better you feel. - *Albert H. Gordon*

These words are from one of the national co-chairmen of the Harvard Campaign, which raised 360 million dollars for Harvard University. Mr. Gordon graduated from Harvard 62 years ago. When he was asked why the campaign was such a success (They raised an average of six million dollars a month for sixty months!), he replied in part with the words quoted above.

Since reading this amazing report of how our richest university is now even richer, Mr. Gordon's words bombard my mind: *They've shown they understand the more you nourish your roots, the better you feel.* Why did the Harvard alumni respond to the call? It had to do with an understanding and appreciation of their roots, says Mr. Gordon.

Our people in Churches of Christ are suffering from a malady that may be widespread among American churches: *they do not feel good about themselves.* Many among us are terribly embarrassed with that one tag of identification that so many of our neighbors hang on us: *You think you are the only ones going to heaven*, or maybe, *You think you are the only true Christians.* When they are too courteous to say such things, we are suspicious that they are thinking them. We want to be known for something more than that we do not use instrumental music in worship.

The more you nourish your roots, the better you feel, says the aged Harvard wheel. While it is to be admitted that Harvard, our oldest and perhaps greatest university, has roots that one may proudly nourish, I affirm here and now that our heritage in Churches of Christ is far more glorious than anything Harvard can come up with.

The problem is that our folk are for the most part ignorant of their roots, and we can't nourish our roots if we do not know about them. Most of our people have heard of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell but they have little understanding of what they really stood for. While our older people know something of more recent Church of Christ history since they helped in making that history, there is almost no connection in their thinking between our recent history and the earlier generations of the Stone-Campbell Movement. It is therefore easy for them to presume that Stone and Campbell believed as the Church of Christ today believes. They are surprised if not shocked to learn that *for the most part* both Stone and Campbell would be rejected by most Churches of Christ today as too different.

This implies that Churches of Christ have twofold roots. They have their *original* roots in the Stone-Campbell Movement which dates back almost two centuries, and they have their *transplanted* roots which dates back less than a century. If we are serious about our heritage, we should begin at the beginning and determine what ideas and principles gave us birth. We can then better determine what we brought with us and what we left behind, as well as what we added, when we were transplanted. By transplantation I am referring to our divorce from the Movement at large and becoming "Churches of Christ" as distinct from Disciples of Christ/Christian Churches who also called themselves by that name as well and still do.

To nourish our heritage and draw values from it we must be selective, whether it be our original roots or our transplanted roots. As we look back with a discriminating eye there will be things that shame us as well as things that make us justly proud. The Holy Spirit has a way of teaching us through history as well as through Scripture, and that includes the bad things that have happened as well as the good things. A philosopher has wisely observed that those who ignore their history have to repeat its mistakes.

Even if Harvard has a great heritage, there may still be things that its alumni are ashamed of, such as the demonstrations in the 1960's when students commandeered the administrative offices. The beleaguered president of the university, who stood in "the Yard" and pled for reason, was left with no choice but to call on the Cambridge police to restore order. Those students, now middle-aged and much wiser, would just as soon forget that part of their roots. But they can learn from the bad as well as the good.

So with ourselves. While we look back upon a Movement that was "born of a passion for the unity of all Christians," to quote one of our pioneers, and went on to divide itself asunder again and again, still there is a great heritage to be prized. We are thus to make the study of history our servant and not our master. If "History is bunk," as Henry Ford supposed, it is because we have allowed it to control us rather than the other way around.

When we look at the best in our roots there are several values that should be emphasized.

1. *A strong devotion and loyalty to the Bible.*

Just as Luther included a translation of the Scriptures into German in his reformation, Alexander Campbell presented our young republic with the first "modern" translation in English of the New Testament, called *The Living Oracles*, as early as 1826. Equally significant was Campbell's rules for the interpretation of the Bible by which he anticipated modern Biblical criticism, even the famous Tuebingen School of Germany which claimed that the Bible should be studied with the same vigorous methods as any other literature.

This means that our forebears not only preached the Bible instead of the creeds of men, but that they were scholars of the Bible. Whether the preacher-farmer or the elder-blacksmith, our folk came to be known as "people of the Book," and their knowledge was not superficial. They took the Bible seriously and they studied it responsibly, even when their education was limited. My own father, who learned to read by reading the Bible and the *Dallas News*, was an example of this. Even though he read little else beside the Bible, his knowledge of the Scriptures was extensive.

We became a Bible people at the very beginning of our history in this country, for when the Republican Methodists, under the leadership of James O'Kelly, wrote out their *Principles of the Christian Church (1794)* they included "The Holy Bible, or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament our only creed, and a sufficient rule of faith and practice." Thomas Campbell was later to put it this way: "Where the Scriptures speak we speak, and where the Scriptures are silent we are silent." It was their way of saying that the Bible was the basis of their faith rather than the creeds and opinions of men.

This has been a hallmark of the Church of Christ all through the years. We are a people that love the Bible and that love has enriched our heritage. Even if some of us may at times be somewhat stubborn, if we can be shown that a doctrine or a practice is supported by Scripture, we will accept it.

If a people's strength can also be their weakness, then it may be that this devotion to the Bible has sometimes misled us. The very Book that should unite us has often divided us, perhaps because we have allowed some preachers to make too much of incidentals of Scripture and even its silence. When such an able and dynamic leader as Daniel Sommer, whose name looms large in Church of Christ history, felt obligated to find authority for artificial lighting in the Bible (and he *did* find a proof text!) , we have our clue that we were sometimes led astray by making the Bible a book that it was never intended to be. This helps to explain why we have several different kinds of Churches of Christ, each drawing a line on the others. Our greatest strength became our undoing. But this need not detract from the fact that we are a people of the Book, an honorable part of our rich heritage.

2. *Liberty of conscience, freedom of opinion.*

In admiring those Republican Methodists who became the first Church of Christ back in 1794 (when Alexander Campbell was a six-year old lad back in Ireland!), we note that they also resolved as one of their founding principles: "The right of private judgment, and the liberty of conscience the privilege and duty of all." It was an amazing statement coming out of the wild and woolly American frontier, even if a passion for freedom and individuality filled the air. For creed-bound, unlettered church folk to see liberty of

conscience and opinion both a privilege and a duty is as remarkable as their resolution to reject all creeds and be directed by the Bible only.

When Barton Stone and the Campbells later became part of the Movement, they too stressed liberty of conscience and freedom of opinion —"In matters of opinion, liberty" became part of a slogan. And the principle was rather faithfully observed, at least as long as Alexander Campbell lived. Even an issue as laden with passion as slavery, up to and including the Civil War, was mostly treated as a matter of personal conscience.

For the most part we continue to be a forbearing people, allowing liberty of conscience and freedom of opinion. While we have some party leaders among us who are quick to draw the line if folk do not kowtow to their dictates, the rank and file of our folk are willing to "live and let live." They can absorb differences within the congregation graciously enough if preachers and editors would not impose scare tactics. It is *natural* for people to be accepting of others of like faith, and that is why Thomas Campbell referred to the scandal of division among Christians as "antiscriptural, anti-Christian, and anti-natural."

Alexander Campbell insisted that unity of faith in essentials with freedom of opinion in non-essentials were basic to his plea. So he did not call for a unity in doctrinal interpretation, but in the great catholic truths upon which all Christians can agree. There is no hope for Churches of Christ being a viable witness in the larger Christian world unless this ingredient of our roots is nourished. We can make nothing a test of fellowship that would not be a condition for going to heaven.

3. *We are to be above all else a unity people and a unity movement.*

To quote those Methodists who became "simply Christians" once more, they named as a cardinal principle of their faith "The union of all followers of Christ to the end that the world may believe." Our founding documents that followed, those created by Haggard, Stone and the Campbells, were all *unity* documents. When Rice Haggard published his treatise on the name Christian in 1804, which was a plea for all sects to unite upon that name, he wrote: "To me it appears, that if the wisdom and subtlety of all the devils in hell had been engaged in ceaseless counsels from eternity, they could not have devised a more complete plan to advance their kingdom than to divide the members of Christ's body." And he named the cause of division: *imposing non-essentials as terms of communion.*

In their *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery,* Barton Stone and his men laid to rest the little presbytery they had created with these intriguing words: "We will that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large." The

document had a ring of inclusiveness that represents the best of our roots: *We heartily unite with our Christian brethren of every name.*

Thomas Campbell afterwards produced the *Declaration and Address* (1809) that not only called for a united church but set forth principles whereby this could be achieved. This document gives us the most quoted non-biblical lines in our history: *The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one, consisting of all those in every place who profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures.*

This document sets forth both the principle of non-judgment and the principle of acceptance. We may judge a man only as the Bible judges him, and we are to "Receive one another even as Christ has received us," a passage repeatedly quoted in the document. The Campbells believed that we can impose things upon others only as they are clearly and explicitly set forth in the Bible, and they complain that divisions in the church are usually caused over things that are not even mentioned in Scripture.

These four documents, the basis of our roots, have a continuing theme, *unity.* It may appear odd to you that not a one of them even mentions baptism, a concern that came later. And only one of them mentions restoration, and it barely. The documents show, as do the other writings of these pioneers, that *Unity is our business!*, a slogan that eventually became current among us. Dr. Robert Richardson, an associate of the Campbells, said it well with "This reformation was born of a passion for unity."

If we in Churches of Christ have lost that passion for unity as enunciated by our founding fathers we have lost the best of our roots. Ours is not to be a plea for conformity to our way of doing things, as if others must become precisely like us, the true "restored" church to the exclusion of all others. Unity is not a "true church" concept but a humble acceptance of all those who are in Christ as equals, sisters and brothers in the family of God. Unity is God's gift to his church, the creation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds, and it is realized when we accept all those that Christ accepts *in spite of differences.* This is what our roots are all about.

There are other important features in our roots, such as the divine name we've always worn, *Christians,* rather than a party name, and the place we have given to those great ordinances of God, baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe in preaching the gospel all over the world and we have always reached out to the dispossessed, from the time David Lipscomb in the South raised money for the poor in the North, even if they were Civil War enemies, to the present hour when our churches are sending millions to starving masses in famine-stricken nations. All that without any denominational headquarters!

And we have always been great singers who love great singing. Recently in Dallas a special singing to honor Tillet S. Teddlie on his l00th birthday, a songwriter who has written many of our hymns, attracted 1300 people. They gathered and sang for two hours. It isn't everybody that does that sort of thing.

Our greatest failure? If we allow a critic to speak to that, and we *must* with prayerful hearts listen to those who criticize us, the answer would be that our greatest failure has been in reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Homer Duncan of Lubbock, TX., editor of *Missionary Crusader* and a Baptist, I believe, has some good things to say about us in his booklet *The So-Called Church of Christ* (no date). But he says there is "one basic error" in every false system, and the basic error of the Church of Christ is that "they have not learned to be taught by the Spirit of God." While he sees our people as for the most part not even believing in the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, he is pleased to concede that some of us do. But our failure to see the mission of the Spirit in the life of the Christian has also, he charges, given us an inadequate view of the grace of God and even of justification by faith. He has heard our preachers ridicule the Holy Spirit, he says, and it is common for Church of Christ folk to equate the Holy Spirit with the Bible.

These criticisms, which I believe have some validity, can also be traced to our roots, which have shown a greater place for a rationalistic interpretation of the Bible than the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. We have not emphasized what 1 John 2 clearly states: "you have no need for anyone to teach you; but his anointing teaches you about all things." Moreover, Jn. 16:7-13 is to the point in describing the Spirit as our teacher. Duncan says when he shows such texts to our preachers that their response is that such scriptures do not apply today!

Alexander Campbell had this problem when he dared to affirm in a debate that the Holy Spirit operates only through the word. Dr. Richardson tried to dissuade him from taking such a position. Campbell modulated his position as he grew older, and Barton Stone, looking back over their early history with a critical eye, stated that the Movement would have grown even more if Campbell had taught in his earlier years what he finally taught about the ministry of the Spirit. Richardson himself sought to strengthen this weak spot by publishing a book on the ministry of the Spirit. If we had followed Richardson in this area instead of Campbell, the likes of Homer Duncan would have no criticism to level against us in reference to the Holy Spirit. As it is we are very vulnerable in reference to this doctrine.

This is enough to show that we have impressive roots, a great history, and a glorious heritage. We have much to draw from and to build on. Like the pilot of an airliner that has a determined destiny, we may have some mid-course corrections to make. We can learn

from the mistakes of those who have gone before, while drawing upon the values they have passed along to us.

Truth is like a torch, the more you shake it the brighter it burns. To change the metaphor, the more vigorously we churn the annals of our history the more the cream will rise to the top. —*the Editor*

Tradition does not mean that the living are dead but that the dead are alive. —*G. K. Chesterton*

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WHAT IS THE LORD'S TABLE?

Cecil Hook

Paul mentions the "Lord's table" (1 Cor. 10:21 KJV). What is the Lord's table? Surely, all of us have seen the Lord's Table, a piece of furniture located between the pulpit and the pews, engraved with "In Remembrance of Me," on which "the communion is set —as though communion is something that can be put on a table.

If that is the Lord's table, what and where is the table of devils that Paul refers to in the same passage?

You surely agree that the table of the Lord is not a piece of furniture. Everybody knows that it is the Lord's Supper —well, everybody except a few heretics like me who are always troubling the waters by asking foolish questions. Let's investigate a bit.

In an effort to make an interpretation consistent with Scripture, let us look back to the Old Testament writing. Perhaps, this is going too far for a context, but it does give some Biblical background.

Adonibezek said that seventy conquered kings "used to pick up scraps under my table" (Judges 1:7). Rather than being under his dining table literally, these subjected kings had to survive on his meager dole.

When David became king, he promised Mephibosheth, "you shall eat at my table always," which he did, being provided for "like one of the king's sons" (2 Sam. 9:7, 10, 11, 13). A similar provision of sustenance was made for Barzillai because of his loyalty to David (2 Sam. 19:31-40; 1 Kings 2:7).

The daily grocery list for those who ate at Solomon's table included ten fat oxen, twenty pasture-fed cattle, and a hundred sheep (1 Kings 4:22-28). Those who ate at Solomon's table were persons on government upkeep.

Those "who ate at Jezebel's table" were the 850 prophets of Asherah and Baal who were sustained at government expense while she was the queen.

Nehemiah informs us that "there were at my table a hundred and fifty men, Jews and officials, etc." and gives an impressive list of daily supplies that were required (Neh. 5:17f). These were people whose needs were supplied by the government through Nehemiah.

In Psalms 23, the table prepared for David was not a dining table, but the total provision of blessing with which God enriched his life, even in times of stress, so that he could say, "I shall not want."

When Israel murmured, asking, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?" they were questioning God's ability or willingness to care for their needs in the wilderness (Psalms 78:17f).

From these references, we can rightly conclude that to eat at the king's table meant to be kept, sustained, and provided for by the king or other ruler at his, or his government's expense. Thus they were honored as sons of the king.

Paul had been dealing with the matter of eating meats offered to idols. Then he gave a warning against idolatry in 1 Corinthians 10:14-22. He points to participation in the communion, involving the cup and the bread, as indicating oneness with Christ, even as the eating of the Levitical sacrifices made Israelites partners in the alter. From these two illustrations of sharing and partnership, he seems to go beyond reference to the Lord's supper by alluding to their traditional concept of what it meant to eat at one's table. A seat at the table was reward for loyalty and oneness of purpose. The expression, "to sit at one's table," meant to give honor and distinction by providing for the upkeep of the person.

A similar expression of sustenance is seen in Acts 6:2 where "the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.'" Those widows were being provided for and sustained by the church, which program was to be administered by the seven deacons. In view of this, we can say that the children in our church-supported homes are eating at the Church's table and that church-supported ministers eat at the table of the church. In like manner, the Lord's table is his provision for us rather than being either the communion or a piece of furniture.

When we accept Christ, and are accepted by him, we are honored to sit at his table "like one of the king's sons!" Every spiritual blessing is supplied in him and, concerning physical needs, he promises "all these things shall be yours as well." "And God is able to provide you with everything and may provide in abundance for every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). He will never leave us or forsake us.

We cannot eat at two tables, expressing loyalty and partnership with, and being sustained by, both the Lord and demons at the same time. There is no double-dipping.

What a blessing, honor, and security it is to sit and eat at the Lord's table like sons of the King —and like the apostles of Christ (Luke 22:30). —*1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX 78130*

Be cautious with whom you associate, and never give your company or your confidence to those of whose good principles you are not sure. —William Hart Coleridge

You may depend upon it that he is a good man whose intimate friends are all good, and whose enemies are decidedly bad. —*Johann Lavater*

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BASIS FOR A WORKING FELLOWSHIP

I had the interesting experience lately of working with some of my Church of Christ friends here in Denton in producing a "Statement of Faith" for a para-church agency they are creating. They want to help those who would be missionaries in foreign fields, especially those who might not be able to be supported by the established agencies.

While they themselves are members of the Church of Christ, they want this effort to reach out to any and all who wish to serve Christ in difficult fields, so they wanted their "Statement of Faith," by which they identify themselves in mailouts, to be broad enough to include all who are resolved to serve Christ faithfully and yet narrow enough to exclude those who are only halfhearted in their profession and practice.

When the first draft seemed too theologically detailed, I told them about Occam's Razor, a logical device that goes back to the middle ages in its insistence that propositions should be pared down to their absolute minimum ("Universal essences should not be unnecessarily multiplied"). This would suggest the "Statement" should be as brief and pointed as possible, stripped of all excess baggage. When one multiplies essences unnecessarily, he invites confusion and obfuscation. To be wordy is to muddle the water. So we sought brevity in our listing of essences.

I thought it would interest you what we came up with, especially since they are our own folk, business/professional men, Abilene-educated, and all that, including at least one membership in the most conservative Church of Christ in our area. We finally reduced our essences to five. I will list them and then say a word about them. This "Statement of Faith" is intended to inform a would-be missionary and potential supporters what this missionary agency believes.

1. We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

2. We believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the risen Lord, and "the same yesterday, today and forever."

3. We believe in the gospel of the grace of God as the only answer to the sinfulness of mankind and the only solution to the problems confronting our world.

4. We believe in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and in the power of the Spirit-filled life.

5. We believe in the church universal as the Body of Christ and in the essential unity of all those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Since these brethren are especially interested in working with missionaries who really believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, including those who might be labeled "Charismatic," we framed the pros positions so as to give place for this concern and yet sought to use language that would be acceptable to the church catholic. We did not want to make "speaking in tongues," for example, part of the statement, for this would be exclusive, and yet we wanted such ones to feel welcomed by what we said about the Holy Spirit. We said nothing about "working miracles" on the mission field, but those who believe in this would find comfort in our second proposition. Proposition 3 is especially for those who believe strongly in a "social gospel" and social action.

I would submit this statement on "general Christianity" as a basis for a working fellowship. We should be able to support, pray for, work and accept anyone who believes these things. We should welcome all such ones to our churches and treat them as equals in Christ. If our own churches have trouble with this statement because baptism is not named

as a condition for membership, this does not preclude their *accepting* them as Christians and treating them as such.

It can be left to each congregation as to whether it will make baptism by immersion a condition for "official" membership. Such registers or membership lists are our own arrangements anyhow and are not matters of divine fiat. But what is a divine imperative is that we accept all those who follow Christ in the same way Christ has accepted us (Rom. 15:7), which has to mean that we accept folk whose faith and obedience are less than perfect.

It may not be too important if we are inscribed in each other's church roll, but it is crucial that we find our way into each other's hearts. But within this fellowship of loving acceptance we will always bear witness to what we believe the Scriptures teach on any and every subject, including baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. —*the Editor*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

In the May 16 issue of *Gospel Advocate* there is an article that asks the question "Is History Repeating Itself?," which points to that division in the Movement that separated Churches of Christ from Christian Churches. The author fears that history *is* repeating itself and that another division is probable. It will be for the same reason as he sees it: *the Christian Churches neglected the New Testament and the Churches of Christ did not.* He names the offenders: "Some have been so influenced in their thinking on this subject by Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett and others of like mind that they are emphasizing 'the union of all Christians' to the neglect of the New Testament as the only true basis for such a union.'" The phrases in quotes are given as the abiding principles of Alexander Campbell. The author calls upon the faithful to take a stand upon "The New Testament as the basis for unity," as if the Christian Churches, Ketcherside and Garrett object to this while Campbell and the Churches of Christ support this. There is a big difference between a plea for unity based upon the New Testament and a call for unity based upon one's opinions and deductions drawn from the New Testament, including even the silence of the New Testament. When Campbell called for unity based upon the New Testament he referred only to those things that are clearly and distinctly set forth, *catholic* principles he called them in that all Christians can agree upon them. That is where I stand. I will buy a plea for unity based upon what is explicitly set forth in Scripture, but not a unity based upon a conformity to Church of Christisms —or any other kind of *isms.*

One of our readers sends in his renewal, along with a club of new subs, and describes himself as “a non-class brother who is not anti.” That well describes the beautiful change that is coming over so many of our people in Churches of Christ. They may remain non-class, non-instrumental, or non-cups (which is their God-given right), but they are no longer “anti” in that they do not make such things a test of fellowship or a condition for accepting their sisters and brothers in Christ who differ with them on such matters.

You may know that Houston is one of the leading medical centers of the world, but you may not know that Churches of Christ now have a resident chaplain in the vast Medical Center there. The program is directed by a board the members of which are not all “mainline” Church of Christ, one exception being G. B. Shelburne, Jr., an elder in the Main St. Church of Christ in South Houston, which is non-class, who is worthy to sit on anyone’s board. Our Houston brethren also provide apartments for those who must be with loved ones in the hospital, free of charge.

To contact this program: Churches of Christ Medical Center Chaplaincy, 4011 W. Bellfort, Houston, TX 77025. By the way, can’t we understand why folk suppose that we too are a denomination? And isn’t that OK? What is not OK is our denial of it and the reasons for so doing.

A letter from a graduate student at Harvard, a Ph.D. candidate in astronomy, reveals that his research focuses upon “the dynamics of superclusters of galaxies.” Not simply galaxies, not even clusters of galaxies, but superclusters of galaxies. One would suppose that such research would not only be dazzling but reverential. The poet in Psa. 8 said that when he considered the heavens he was moved to ask “What is man that God is mindful of him?” We hope as much for the Harvard student.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

Do not judge the whole Pentecostal/Charismatic movement by what you see on the surface. Seek out someone among us for dialogue about these things that you question. One can get a distorted view of Church of Christ ministers by listening to some of them on radio/TV, but I have been blessed with fellowship with ministers of the “Campbellite” tradition, finding them to be loving and caring, even though we disagree on some things. We are not perfect but neither are your brethren. —*Nathan Hopson, Sweetwater, TX.*

(I am not sure what I said that displeased this reader, but I will emphasize one thing, especially in response to the last sentence. “Charismatic” Christians are as much my brothers and sisters as “Church of Christ” Christians. The identifying badge should be “Love one another even as I have loved you,” not whether one speaks in tongues, etc. I love this brother sight unseen and his word of advice is good for us all. —*Ed.*)

I appreciate your journal. A friend was telling me how much he enjoyed your journal and I told him you were the Paul Harvey of our movement. —*David L. Burns, Williamsville Christian Church, Williamsville, IL.*

(I asked Ouida what this might mean, the Paul Harvey of the Movement, and she said it must be because I give “the rest of the story.” I will accept that as a compliment provided we realize that “the whole story” has not yet been told. In our struggle for self-criticism and self-improvement, which are crucial to our spiritual growth, we have hardly more than just begun. —*Ed.*)

Our board was delighted that you had consented to prepare an article for *Integrity,* as busy as you are, and that the article was prepared with such intensity of personal meaning regarding the hurts and pains of life. —*Joseph F. Jones, 800 Trombley St., Troy, MI 48084.*

(Joe, one of the editors of *Integrity,* refers to a piece I did for that journal entitled “When Grief Calls,” which will not appear in this journal. If you are not reading *Integrity,* you should write to Joe and have him put you on the mailing list. There is no subscription price, but you might want to make a donation eventually. —*Ed.*)

I have been a preacher for the Church of Christ for three years now, and was raised in the “church.” I took a degree from one of “our” Christian colleges in Bible. My father-in-law introduced me to your journal. I have borrowed his old copies and have enjoyed them thoroughly, especially the ones dealing with fellowship and unity. You have opened a new door for me in my pilgrimage. In college I took a course in Restoration History, but I was not taught about the unity aspect of the movement. I am amazed to discover some of the things Alexander Campbell taught, and I realize that most of our churches would disfellowship anyone for teaching some of the things he taught. While I am discouraged that we have wandered so far from what our Restoration fathers taught, I am nonetheless encouraged that so many Churches of Christ are breaking out of the old molds and looking at God’s word afresh. —*John W. Barksdale, Jr., Box 222, McPherson, KS 67460.*

I am currently reading *The Stone-Campbell Movement* and find it quite provocative, enlightening, and readable. Thank you for the work. It certainly provides a different perspective than the course I took from - - - at - - - -. —*Arizona.*

(Whether or not you had a course in Restoration history under So and So at So and So, we want you to give *The Stone-Campbell Movement* a critical reading. You can get it two ways: by sending us a check for 21.95 (we pay the postage); or send us a list of 8 subs to this journal, which can include your own, new and renewal, and 3.00 each (24.00 total) and we will send you a book free of charge. —*Ed.*)

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BOOK NOTES

If you love the *King James Version* you must have a copy of *The New King James Version.* We can supply it in beautiful, durable, burgundy hardcover for only 13.50 postpaid, and this is the entire Bible. It is the old *KJ* in beauty with punctuation and unfamiliar words updated and archaic words modernized.

We have waited for months for the *other* book by Stephen Neil on *The Difficult Sayings of Jesus.* We can now send you both volumes for 9.50 postpaid. *Difficult Sayings* is 3.50 and *More Difficult Sayings* is 6.50 if purchased separately. Whether it is "Casting pearls before swine," "Pay Caesar what is due Caesar," or "You are not far from the kingdom" you will find these books packed with both information and edification.

F.F. Bruce is always delightful to read and you will relish his new book, *The Pauline Circle*, which tells us about eleven of the apostle's associates, plus several other "coworkers" and "hosts and hostesses." Bruce writes about them as if he too were within Paul's circle, and he is unique in being both scholarly and palpable. 5.50 postpaid.

And be sure to include some of the women who are writing, such as Kitty Muggeridge's *Gazing on Truth.* She both lifts you up and makes you think when she writes briefly on numerous subjects, whether on the blessed sacrament, meditation, or why we should pray. These serve well as two-page meditations, and a prayer is included with each. Since our people generally neglect devotional material, we highly recommend this little volume. 5.50 postpaid.

Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History is as important as anything Francis Schaeffer ever wrote, and most helpful in understanding OT history and the relation between God and Israel. We can supply copies at 5.50 postpaid.

The Mormon Papers indicts Mormonism at its tap, its own Bibles. It tells you what Mormons really believe and why. 4.50 postpaid.

Stephen Neil's *Christian Faith and Other Faiths* tells you what it means to be a Buddhist in the 1980's, or a Hindu or a Moslem, etc. compared to what it means to be Christian. While the author is a Christian and believes that Jesus is the light of the world, he believes that there are important things to learn from other religions. A very informative and well written study. 8.50 postpaid.

Book Burning by Cal Thomas may cause your hair to stand on end, for it lays out the facts of how schools, libraries and bookstores routinely discriminate against books which deal with our religious and traditional values as a nation. It tells how the news media often suppress the religious viewpoint and how school curriculums often give our children a distorted picture of the world. 6.50 postpaid.

We have a new supply of K.C. Moser's books, the Church of Christ minister who alerted our people years ago of our neglect of the gospel of the grace of God. *the Gist of Romans* and *The Way of Salvation* are 5.95 each postpaid.

We are encouraged that many who read *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett. Order extra copies for gifts to others, and a physician in California is considering sending a free copy to every preacher in the Movement that will read it. So you might reconsider if you have not yet read it. If you'll send a check with your order, we'll pay postage and handling. 21.95. Or if you want a free copy, see the box below.

You will be impressed with the bound copies of this journal in matching volumes back to 1977 (earlier ones are no longer available), with colorful dust jackets. *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977) and *The Ancient Order* (1978), single volumes, are 5.95 each. *Blessed Are The Peacemakers* and *With All The Mind (1979*80) and *Jesus Today* (1981-82), double volumes, are 9.00 each. Prepaid only please. The bound volume for 1983-84, entitled *The Doe of the Dawn,* should be ready by summer.

You can help circulate this journal through our club rate for four or more names (no limit) at 3.00 per year per name. You send us the names and we do the mailing. Bundle rates to one address is the same rate. Some of our most appreciative readers are those who were introduced to the journal by someone else, so why not give this a chance with some of your friends.

If you send us eight subs (counting your own or your renewal) at 3.00 each (total 24.00), we will send you a free copy of *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett, but you have to request the book.

Our next issue will be the September number. As per our mailing permit we do not publish in July and August. Ouida and I wish for you a blessed summer. I will take my 10-year old grandson to the Ozarks.

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